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CHALLENGE

FIGHT FOR COMMUNISM • LUCHE POR EL COMUNISMO • PLP

THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER OF PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

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Kolkata Students Blast Bosses' Bribes

KOLKATA, INDIA, September 15 — Hundreds of students at a public engineering university raged in protest at the cricket association's attempt to privatize one of the campus cricket fields—a seemingly small struggle that reflects a big surge in working-class consciousness and rebellion.

Privatization is the process whereby publicly owned property is given—or rented at a low cost—to private businesses, which then make a profit at the expense of the working class. Such actions by the rulers destroy the illusion of any division between the public and private sectors. In reality, both are controlled by the capitalist bosses.

Bosses' Bribe Rejected

The association claimed the university's fields would be turned into "world-class venues" to which students would still have access. They pledged to maintain the upkeep and even build viewing galleries. They also promised this action would lead to more sports development on campus. But we refused to take the bribe!

This is usually a quiet campus; there hasn't been a major demonstration in more than ten years. Yet today we erupted in protest. Today we forced the dean to call off the deal between the university and the cricket association. Today we asserted working-class student power.

Students Rebel

The cricket field struggle adds to the recent wave of protests and strikes in India. Kolkata in particular has a long history of anti-capitalist militancy. Last year, at least 30,000 students from Jadavpur University shut down parts of this city of millions to protest cover-ups of sexual abuse and police brutality against students.

Students at a New Delhi college went on indefinite strike on June 12, when the actor-turned-politician Gajendra Chauhan was appointed chairman of their school. Students are continuing to cripple this premier film university despite the ministry's effort to pacify them.

Through a communist lens, this is an opportunity to build international solidarity. The protests in Kolkata are part of a fight against capitalism worldwide. It's up to communists on other campuses — from Chicago to Mexico to Israel — to link their local fightbacks to the uprisings in India.

Class War Rages

Students are only one part of the working class that's fighting back. On September 2, as many as 150 million workers from nearly every sector — from banking and insurance to mining, shipping, manufacturing, and transportation — went on a national day-long strike against fascist Prime Minister Narendra Modi's economic reforms. Bosses lost $3.7 billion in profits.

Of course, the out-of-power reformist political parties and union misleaders used the strike to build their base of support against Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a Hindu nationalist party currently running the government. The BJP has a mass base in the viciously racist and sexist Hindu nationalist movement, the Hindutva, which bears many similarities to Hitler's Nazi Party (see CHALLENGE, 2/25/15). While the BJP is openly fascist, the opposition parties and union heads differ only in their strategy. They share the same goal: to maintain a capitalist dictatorship over the working class.

But the workers and students who took the streets in defiance of the police and the capitalist state weren't out to back one group of politicians over another. Politicians don't control us! The working class in India is fighting for better working and living conditions. The task of Progressive Labor Party is to show that only a communist society can meet workers' needs.

Our movement must follow two key strategies. First, we must make the fight against capitalist divisions front and center. We must reject racist, sexist, ethnic, caste, and religious discrimination—these are the main forces holding back our struggle! Second, we must organize among the masses to become a revolutionary force of hundreds of millions. Progressive Labor Party is building that movement worldwide, from the Indian subcontinent to Africa to Latin America. We welcome everyone in the working class to add strength, wisdom, and leadership to the struggle to build communism.✪

JOIN THE INTERNATIONAL FIGHT FOR COMMUNIST REVOLUTION

★EDITORIAL
U.S. Bosses Buy Time for War
page 2

★BROOKLYN
To Avenge Kyam, Smash Racism Worldwide
page 3

★INDUSTRY
UAW Sells Out, Workers Fight Back
page 4

★HEPATITIS C
Communism: Best Vaccine
page 5

★BALTIMORE
Smash KKKops with Communist Revolution
page 8

OUR FIGHT

✯Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to destroy capitalism and the dictatorship of the capitalist class. We organize workers, soldiers and youth into a revolutionary movement for communism.

✯Only the dictatorship of the working class — communism — can provide a lasting solution to the disaster that is today's world for billions of people. This cannot be done through electoral politics, but requires a revolutionary movement and a mass Red Army led by PLP.

✯Worldwide capitalism, in its relentless drive for profit, inevitably leads to war, fascism, poverty, disease, starvation and environmental destruction. The capitalist class, through its state power — governments, armies, police, schools and culture — maintains a dictatorship over the world's workers. The capitalist dictatorship supports, and is supported by, the anti-working-class ideologies of racism, sexism, nationalism, individualism and religion.

✯While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions worldwide. Capitalism returned to Russia and China because socialism retained many aspects of the profit system, like wages and privileges. Russia and China did not establish communism.

✯Communism means working collectively to build a worker-run society. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. While capitalism needs unemployment, communism needs everyone to contribute and share in society's benefits and burdens.

✯Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of "race." Capitalism uses racism to super-exploit Black, Latin, Asian and indigenous workers, and to divide the entire working class.

✯Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women — sexism — and divisive gender roles created by the class society.

✯Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.

✯Communism means that the minds of millions of workers must become free from religion's false promises, unscientific thinking and poisonous ideology. Communism will triumph when the masses of workers can use the science of dialectical materialism to understand, analyze and change the world to meet their needs and aspirations.

✯Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers. Join Us!

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WHO WRITES FOR CHALLENGE?

The fact that CHALLENGE/PLP articles are not signed grows from PLP's criticism of the cult of the individual in the former socialist Soviet Union and China. We do not want to encourage the possibility of building up a "following" around any particular individual.

While an article may be written by one person, the final version is based on collective discussion and criticism. Many times this collective discussion even precedes an individual's writing of an article.

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Editorial

Iran Nuke Deal: U.S. Bosses Buy Time for War

Barack Obama's nuclear deal with Iran—hailed by the capitalists' liberal media as a step back from global war—is in fact a strategic move toward broader imperialist conflict. It is another sign that the U.S. bosses are not yet ready to launch an all-out invasion, at least not until they've put their own house in order. The current U.S. presidential campaign, with the Republican Party in disarray and leading Democrat Hillary Clinton even less trusted by voters than Donald Trump (washingtonpost.com, 8/20/15), reflects the rulers' predicament. For now, they have neither the political leadership nor the working-class base for a new military draft, an essential element in a major ground war.

The workers of Iran have suffered under more than 30 years of U.S. sanctions on trade, finance, energy, and technology. These restrictions have sent the prices of meat, milk, bread, and medicine soaring. Workers have been forced to buy on a black market run by the same officials and military officers supposedly targeted by the U.S. ruling class. Obama's "peace" pact is designed to end these sanctions in return for a 10- to 15-year pause in Tehran's nuclear weapons program. The U.S. bosses hope the agreement will buy them time to mobilize to fight the larger imperialist wars coming down the road, most likely against China or Russia or both.

From Iran to China to Detroit, the Progressive Labor Party is fighting to unite workers in a mass international organization. We aim to smash imperialism with communist revolution, and to build a world without the horrors of child-killing sanctions or war. The international working class can't rely on phony deals made between the biggest thieves on the planet. We need a world where we run society for ourselves!

U.S. Bosses Know War Is Coming

In their 2015 edition of *The National Military Strategy*, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff—the top uniformed servants of U.S. imperialism—estimate that an "interstate war with a major power" is a "growing" probability. A related article published by the U.S. Army War College (Strategic Studies Institute, 4/8/15) warns: "….the United States has almost no excess industrial or logistics infrastructure, or human capacity to mobilize for war." To address this looming crisis, the article argues, U.S. bosses must end their internal partisan splits, raise taxes to finance their military, and most likely restore the draft. As the author concedes, none of this will be easy:

> *The public might bear these costs if the stakes were high enough, but policymakers could not automatically assume so…. Today, the public is unaccustomed to crushing taxation or postponed consumption. It would not take long for dissatisfaction to grow, possibly generating pressure to negotiate a settlement short of victory.*

This is a prescription, plain and simple, for more fascism: lower wages, higher taxes and prices, more racism and racist police terror to stave off insurrection, and millions of working-class children conscripted for imperialist slaughter.

Sign Now, Slaughter Later

For Iran's capitalist bosses, expanding their dominance in the Middle East matters more than any short-term deal with the U.S. For decades, the U.S. bosses have been waging trillion-dollar wars to secure their control over the region's oil—a "vital" national interest, according to the Carter Doctrine espoused in 1980 by President Jimmy Carter. Today, Iran and the U.S. are locked in proxy wars in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Bahrain, Lebanon, and Israel/Palestine. As Majid Rafizadeh, a Harvard-affiliated Iran watcher, observed in the Huffington Post (9/26/15):

> *Tehran is so deeply entrenched in the well-established and instituted ideological, sectarian (Sunni vs. Shia), and ethnic (Persians vs. Arabs) norms that it is impossible for the government and Iranian leaders to change the character of the state.*

Translation: The Iranian bosses aren't likely to ally with the U.S. any time soon.

U.S. strategists acknowledge that Obama's Iran gamble may turn out badly. Under President Vladimir Putin, Russia has countered U.S. sanctions with technical, military, and diplomatic aid to Iran. Most recently, Russia "moved to expand its political and military influence in the Syria conflict" with an agreement to share intelligence on the Islamic State with Iran, along with Iraq and Syria (New York Times, 9/27/15).

Richard Haass, head of the Council on Foreign Relations (a leading think tank bankrolled by U.S. finance capital), has sounded the alarm over a potential alliance between Iran, Russia and China. Haass favors Obama's nuclear deal because "it buys you 10 or 15 years" (MSNBC, 7/27/15), but warns, "there is also the danger that Iran will fail to comply…. What matters is that non-compliance be met with renewed sanctions and, if needed, military force" (Huffington Post, 7/15/15).

Turn Imperialist War Into Class War!

The workers of the world have nothing to gain by relying on any boss. Capitalism can bring us only more terror. The laws of imperialist competition will compel capitalist rulers on all sides to intensify fascist terror—to discipline our class and force us into their military killing machines. The Progressive Labor Party is building our movement in more than two dozen countries. It is open to all workers, students and soldiers who want a world free of racism, sexism and imperialism. Join us! Help us turn imperialist war into class war for communism!✪

To Avenge Kyam, Smash Racism Worldwide

August 2015: Kyam demonstration takes the streets

BROOKLYN, September 21 — Forty workers and students demonstrated today in the continuing struggle for justice for Kyam Livingston, murdered in 2013 by the kkkops' medical negligence in Brooklyn's Central Booking Jail.

Kyam's family and the Justice For Kyam Committee, with strong support from the Progressive Labor Party, have guaranteed monthly actions to remember July 21, the date of her murder. The racism of Kyam's indifferent cop jailers caused her death, the speakers explained to scores of neighbors who stopped on their way home from work. Members of PLP explained that the capitalist rulers use their police forces to terrorize workers and discourage fightback. Many residents of this mainly immigrant working-class neighborhood listened, donated money, and took leaflets and over 300 copies of CHALLENGE. The overwhelmingly positive response to our monthly actions prove that the bosses, their lackeys and their brutal profit system can't stop the struggle of the working class.

Kyam's mother spoke movingly of her daughter's final hours, the conditions faced by those held in central booking, the callousness of those responsible for her daughter's death and her own commitment to seeing those responsible punished. She vowed to shut down the Central Booking Jail and the crowd responded, "Shut it down, shut it down, shut this racist system down!"

A speaker related the struggle in Palestine/Israel to the struggle in the U.S. against racist police violence.

Among the several members of PLP speaking at the rally, one young teacher, holding her toddler in her arms, moved the crowd when she said no mother should have to bury her child. There is something wrong with a system, she went on, where the mainly Black and Latin students in her school are forced to start their day by passing through scanners like criminals.

Another teacher spoke about students being forced to learn how to "assume the position" by the NYPD. Both related the murders by police from Brooklyn to Texas to Ferguson to Baltimore, as well as the everyday oppression faced by the working class, to the need to destroy capitalism with communist revolution.✪

Antiracists vs. Trump

NEW YORK, September 25 — A community group recently protested in front of a building near Central Park owned by gutter racist, sexist presidential candidate Donald Trump. We protested racist statements made by Trump against Latin immigrants—in particular, statements referring to Mexicans as rapists, drug dealers and murderers. These slurs, along with a number of Nazi-style proposals, are a central part of Trump's campaign.

The demonstration was well attended, and many from our local PL club participated. Even though the organizations behind the action push the pro-capitalist agenda of the Democratic Party, the demonstrators militantly responded to our chants of: "Workers' Struggles Have No Borders"; "We Are Workers, Not 'Illegals'"; and "Amnesty Now, No More Deportations."

One comrade connected Trump's racism to the problems faced by immigrants worldwide. He spoke about Syrians fleeing the violence of war and crossing into Europe, only to be mistreated and humiliated. He mentioned the African migrants who die by the thousands as they flee poverty, war, and disease, as well as those from the Middle East and Asia. All of these crises are caused by capitalism; the situation for the working class is getting worse and worse.

The demonstration's reformist leaders sidelined two individuals who began yelling insults at Trump. These two had the courage to challenge the police, even standing in the middle of the street. By contrast, when a Trump sympathizer started yelling insults at us, the misleaders failed to respond.

Whenever possible, PL members should try to give leadership to the working class. With militant chants and ideas, we should always lay the blame for the deteriorating world condition at its root cause: capitalism and imperialism. As we unite and fight back to change this horrific profit system, workers will join us to work toward a communist revolution—the only solution to racism and war.✪

Unite Drivers Against Taxi Bosses!

NEW YORK CITY, September 16 — As old and new taxi bosses divide workers to lower their wages, three hundred taxi drivers rallied outside Governor Andrew Cuomo's Manhattan office today as part of the Global Day of Action Against Ubernomics. They were protesting Cuomo's plan to give Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) like Uber & Lyft approval to dispatch fares to an unlimited number of drivers using personal cars across New York State. This move increases competition and attacks driver's income. In June, taxi drivers in Paris went on strike and blocked major highways to stop the Uber advance there.

TNCs are destroying full-time jobs and incomes for tens of thousands of taxi drivers and their families. In San Francisco, the home of Uber, 3,000 regulated taxis compete against 30,000 private cars. Driver income is down 20 to 30 percent. In Boston, 3,000 taxis are pitted against 10,000 private cars. Driver income is down 25 percent.

At the same time, the traditional taxi companies attack their workforce by classifying drivers as private contractors, even though 85 percent lease their cabs every day and are responsible for gas as well. The 16,000-member Taxi Workers Alliance is trying to re-establish a union in an industry that provides no collective bargaining, unemployment compensation, or healthcare benefits. The New York City Taxi & Limousine Commission presides over the racist super-exploitation of these mainly immigrant South Asian and Black workers, similar to the bosses' attack on workers in construction, home healthcare, domestic workers, and freelance writers. By 2020, contract workers are expected to make up 40 percent of the U.S. workforce.

All drivers—whether unionized or on contract, whether they're oppressed by Uber or exploited by the traditional taxi bosses—must unite to build a world where our labour is fully valued. We must fight for a society run by collectivity, not profit, to meet our needs of health, food, housing, and education.

PLP is working among contract workers — from Israel-Palestine to New York City — as they fight for financial and social security, with the outlook of uniting across lines of work. We will sharpen the class struggle and show that the only security we have as workers comes from building an international movement for communist revolution.✪

Immigrant Workers Fight Racism

On Sept 15, a driver/organizer for the New York Taxi Workers Alliance (NYTWA) was passing out fliers for the Ubernomics rally to his co-workers at a taxi lot at LaGuardia Airport. He was physically assaulted by a dispatcher, who then called the cops on the driver. All of the drivers got out of their cabs and refused to move. The racist New York Police Department used vans and police dogs to surround the lot full of mostly immigrant drivers from South Asia and the Caribbean. The drivers still refused to get back in their cars. After a tense stand-off, the organizer was released and the dispatcher arrested. Only then did the cab drivers resume work. The organizer spent the night in the hospital, but attended the next day's rally with his son.

Homelessness Part and Parcel of Capitalism

Like racism, poverty, and mass unemployment, homelessness is an integral element of capitalism. By driving rents ever higher, capitalists increase their profits and then blame the homeless victims. Many workers who can't afford their rent or to save toward a place of their own end up joining the bosses' military—sent off to kill other workers turned into homeless refugees by capitalist inequality and imperialist war.

Communism would focus solely on meeting the needs of the working class throughout the world. Providing shelter for all workers would be primary. With all wages, currency, and profit abolished, the labor and resources now used to construct rent-generating office buildings would be diverted to build safe and sanitary living quarters for the working class.

Homelessness is sexist and racist. It is sexist because it imprisons millions of women in unsafe conditions and abusive relationships because they can't afford to move out and find a home for themselves and their children. Among U.S. adults in homeless shelters in one recent study, 78 percent were women (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, July 2011).

Homelessness is racist because Black, Latin, and immigrant workers are super-exploited or subject to racist unemployment, to the point where millions cannot afford rent, let alone buying a home. In 2010, according to a report by The Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness, Black family members in the U.S. were seven times as likely to have stayed in a homeless shelter as white family members (huffingtonpost.com, 3/14/12).

In India, where 96 percent of a vast housing shortage affects low-income workers, you can find "miles and miles of built homes with nobody living in them" in suburbs of Delhi, the capital (BBC.com, 5/21/15). According to the property consulting firm CRBE South Asia, there are 12 million vacant homes across urban India—many built to shelter investments by wealthy individuals seeking to dodge taxes.

In New York City, one can walk by countless new luxury condos that the working class cannot possibly afford. Outside, on the sidewalks of the capital of world capital, homeless people are forced to ask for money to eat.

Banks Win, Workers Lose

A vast amount of homelessness in the U.S. was created by the crisis of overproduction of homes that began in 2007—what the bosses call "the subprime mortgage crisis." From the beginning of capitalism, the system has created periodic crises when more of a product is produced than can be sold. When the working class became unable to keep up payments on homes where the real estate value had plummeted, millions lost everything. Under Barack Obama as the banks got bailed out, the working class got sold out.

Imperialism is the stage of capitalism where capital must go beyond national borders to achieve a maximum return on investment. As China has turned to market capitalism, newly minted billionaires—running scared from the Chinese bosses' cynical "anti-corruption" campaign—are investing in real estate in places like New York and Los Angeles.

As a result, housing prices have been driven even higher; in both of these cities, homeless is again on the rise. And how did these rich Chinese get their money in the first place – by brutally exploiting their own workers! This illustrates the maxim: What affects workers anywhere affects our class everywhere.

Homelessness will end with the destruction of the profit system. With the leadership of Progressive Labor Party, we will organize society to provide for the working class. We will build a society based on communist economics: "From each according to commitment, to each according to need." Instead of having countless miles of empty homes while workers are desperate and homeless, we will build the housing that the working class needs and deserves.✪

UAW Sells Out; Workers Fight Back

DETROIT, September 28 — "This is bullshit! It will take me another eight years to reach top pay!" That's what one worker at Chrysler's Jefferson North Assembly Plant said of the tentative sellout agreement between Fiat Chrysler Automobiles US (FCA) and 40,000 workers in the United Auto Workers (UAW). If what he says is true, top pay will be $25 an hour, a 15 percent cut from the current rate. The UAW leadership's nationalist "Buy American" dogma and their strategy of partnering with the capitalist auto bosses has been a racist disaster for the mainly Black workers of Detroit, Flint, Pontiac, Chicago and other cities. Thousands of Black families in Detroit are facing another wave of water shutoffs and foreclosures.

The local bosses' plans to build new sports arenas for their own profit and entertainment wouldn't be possible without the total collaboration of the UAW misleadership. Once upon a time, the UAW was a militant union organized by communists during the class wars of the 1930s. The great Flint sit-down strike of 1936-7 inspired workers throughout the world. Coinciding with the successes of the first workers' state, the Soviet Union, Flint gave bosses worldwide good reason to tremble at the prospect of revolution. But over the decades, the old movement's strategy of allying with lesser-evil bosses has turned unions like the UAW into powerful enemies of the working class.

The revolutionary communist Progressive Labor Party is picking up the red flag where the heroic workers of Detroit once raised it. We are fighting for what bosses fear most: communist revolution.

With "Friends" Like These...

Having given away the store, UAW President Dennis Williams was promising hourly pay raises for longtime workers who haven't seen one in a decade. He also said the union would "bridge the gap" for second-tier workers hired after 2007, who now start at about half the pay of first-tier workers. Fiat Chrysler CEO Sergio Marchionne had another idea for how to end the two-tier system: by lowering wages for top-tier workers!

Today, 45 percent of FCA-UAW members make entry-level wages of about $17 per hour. Over the last two labor contracts negotiated by the UAW, FCA workers have seen their wages drop as much as $30 per hour. These givebacks by workers' false friends in the UAW and the Democratic Party have lowered their pay to the level of non-union workers at Toyota and Honda in the U.S. South. Now, in the name of moving production back to the U.S. from Mexico, these class traitors are pushing more wage-cutting contracts.

After decades of being battered by its international competition, culminating in the 2007 bankruptcies of GM and what was then Chrysler, the U.S. auto industry has undergone drastic changes. So has the UAW, which has chosen to ally with U.S. auto bosses instead of the international working class.

Counting the foreign-owned "transplants" and the massive parts supplier industry (which used to be mostly in-house at the Big Three auto makers), there could be more than 700,000 auto workers in the U.S. But the vast majority of the industry, including temporary and part-time workers, is non-union, and wages outside the core assembly plants have collapsed. The parts supplier industry has workers making as little as $9 per hour, even as they toil for luxury auto makers from Cadillac to Mercedes.

Thousands of workers may be voting this contract down. Workers have rejected it at Jefferson North, Sterling Stamping, Trenton Engine, Kokomo Casting, and Toledo Machining. No matter what the final count, this antiracist rebellion by the rank-and-file against the UAW leadership is a welcome development.

Same Enemy, Same Fight!

The attack on autoworkers is worldwide. On September 10, 4,300 Ford workers in Sao Bernardo de Campo, the industrial region around Sao Paulo, Brazil, went on strike against mass layoffs and pay cuts. The strike concluded with a deal to cut workers' hours by 20 percent! Workers in Brazil at Fiat, Volvo, Mitsubishi, Volkswagen and truck manufacturer Iveco have faced thousands of layoffs and forced time off without pay.

The ruling Workers' Party, Brazil's version of the U.S. Democratic Party, has been busy slashing workers' wages and pay in response to what they call the "economic crisis." Meanwhile, these bosses are rolling out a red carpet of tax breaks and blank checks to builders of giant stadiums and luxury hotels for the 2016 Olympic Games. The workers of Brazil gave $15 billion to the capitalists to pay for the 2014 FIFA World Cup, sponsored by Ford and Fiat—a disaster for the working class. Now the workers in Detroit, like their sisters and brothers in Brazil, are shouldering the costs of new professional sports stadiums there.

Unlike the UAW or Brazil's anti-Workers' Party leaders, the Progressive Labor Party isn't trying to bail out the bosses; we're fighting to destroy them with communist revolution. We're not pushing two-tier wage contracts; we're fighting to abolish wage slavery.

PLP salutes the militancy of industrial workers fighting back in São Paulo and Detroit! Over the past three years, tens of thousands of autoworkers in Brazil, Mexico, China, South Africa, and Turkey have staged bitter strikes. Their unions cut deals to keep the assembly lines churning out profits for the capitalists. As the 1937 Flint strike showed, industrial workers are at the center of capitalism's profit engine. They will play a key role in communist revolution. United with the international revolutionary communist PLP, we can build a world run by the working class. PL'ers and friends should call on their local unions to organize actions of solidarity with auto workers from Detroit to Brazil. Our aim is to build an international PLP that can smash this racist, imperialist system once and for all.✪

Communism: Best Vaccine for Hep C

In 2014, a wave of enthusiasm swept the medical field as new medicines to cure hepatitis C became available. Older treatments had limited success in eradicating the virus, and side effects stopped many from completing treatment. The new medications can eliminate the virus in 80 to 95 per cent of cases, are in easy-to-take pill form and have few, if any, side effects over the 8 to 24 weeks of treatment.

The wave crashed, however, on the cost of the medications: a thousand dollars per pill. Profits to Gilead Sciences, the first to get a new drug approved, are projected in the billions. In yet another chapter of the racist U.S. bosses' history of medical apartheid, the high cost of these medications hits Black workers hardest, along with millions of workers around the world suffering from this virus.

Hep C and Racism

Hepatitis C affects from 135 to 160 million people worldwide, including an estimated three million in the United States. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Black workers comprise 22 per cent of all hepatitis C patients, despite being only thirteen percent of the U.S. population. The mortality rate for middle-aged Black workers with hep C (8 percent) is twice that of comparable white workers; native Americans and Alaskan natives with hep C have an even higher mortality rate. In the U.S., more people die from hepatitis C complications than from HIV-related illnesses! Hepatitis C causes death from liver cancer and cirrhosis of the liver in 5 to 10 per cent of sufferers, and is the leading cause of liver transplants in the U.S.

Hepatitis C is usually a chronic disease. Life-threatening complications take 10 to 30 years to develop. HIV and alcoholism increase the rate and speed of complications. While physicians agree that almost all of those infected should be treated, the insurance companies have decided that only those with the worst disease should get medication. The process to get approved for treatment under Medicaid frustrates both doctors and patients. Many give up, and the cost is prohibitive for the uninsured and undocumented. If you live in states like Louisiana, which opted out of expanding Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act, you're similarly out of luck.

Pharmaceutical price-gouging has been in the news of late—particularly the company that raised the price of Daraprim, which treats an HIV-related illness, from $13 to $750 per pill. But Daraprim is only the best-known example. Current costs for the new hepatitis C treatments—Harvoni, Solvadi, and Veikira Pak—would bankrupt public health programs like Medicaid. Medicare faces huge costs as well, since federal rules bar Medicare from negotiating lower prices. Legislative efforts to change this policy have failed, because politicians are bought and paid for by the drug companies.

Bosses Profit, Workers Die

Pharmaceutical companies like Gilead claim that prices are driven by research costs. In fact, research on the hepatitis C virus was funded publicly, through taxes paid by the working class to fund institutions like the National Institutes of Health. Scientists and investors developed this public research, claimed the patent rights for the first drug, Solvadi, and formed a company, Pharmasett, that invested less than $500 million in research and development to produce the medication. Gilead then bought the drug for $11 billion and promptly began selling it. Production costs per patient are about $100, but the price of treatment is approximately $100,000—a markup of one thousand to one. In the first year alone, Gilead billed Medicare and Medicaid $6 billion. This naked capitalist struggle for profits leaves workers without lifesaving treatments.

International treatment of hepatitis C is likewise controlled by the drug companies. Trade agreements

like the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement are designed to protect companies' patents. Egypt, with the highest rate of hep C in the world, was offered a discount but only for "a sliver of people abroad who are lucky recipients of some specialized access program… access is fatally compromised and the human right to health is fundamentally violated" ((Jeffrey Sachs, con-

Continued on page 7

Mary Harris
Heart & Thunder for the Working Class

Mary "The Jewel" Harris, who died on September 4, was known by everybody in Progressive Labor Party's Philadelphia hospital work. She was a wonderful friend, a force of nature, the salt of the earth—and a terror if you got on her bad side. Mary was also a pillar of PLP. When she worked in housekeeping, she routinely distributed up to 60 CHALLENGEs. After each issue, she would pass over a bag heavy with coins and bills.

Mary steered many CHALLENGE readers toward the Party and was invaluable in recruiting new members. Whenever we organized union and PLP events, her participation helped guarantee success.

Mary took to heart the egalitarian promise of communism and participated in her club's political discussions with an unpretentious sincerity. She viewed May Day as the day for "our family," meaning the working class. Mary also embraced her hospital comrades, Black and white, as family, something she didn't take lightly.

In a fight, she was someone you wanted on your side. When actions were needed on the job, some might be scared, but Mary was always up to the task. Short in stature, she had a booming voice that never needed amplification, and a fierceness that intimidated larger adversaries. Respect for Mary and her loyal friends and co-workers helped to restrain attacks on PL members by the union and hospital bosses.

Two years ago, Mary accompanied us when 50 hospital union retirees marched into the hospital administration offices to protest benefit cutbacks. When an executive vice president emerged with menacing security men to "reason" with us, Mary stood directly in front of him. At full volume, she yelled, "I need my medicine! I need my medicine!" The executive was about six-foot-three and Mary only came up to his belly button, but she unnerved him. Afterward, she observed with her sly grin that the administrator "looked like he was 'bout to cry."

One PL comrade remembers transporting Mary and a carload of her friends to a union meeting. The women workers talked about how they protected themselves in some dangerous Philly neighborhoods. The comrade was impressed by the women's matter-of-fact courage, especially when each of them pulled knives or clubs from their purses; one even produced an enormous revolver. For these women, the need for violence was not some abstract philosophical question. Armed with PLP's ideas they will be a formidable revolutionary force.

Mary kept up her political activism and personal relationships to the day of her death. She was so sick when she came to the emergency room that she couldn't remember the phone numbers of the two comrades who were her emergency contacts. For six days, Mary's friends and family didn't know she was in the hospital. Then a hospital social worker who knew Mary from her activism found a comrade's contact number.

Workers from many departments visited Mary in the hospital. Retirees came from their homes. Many younger workers described how she had been a mother figure to them. Worker after worker told stories like, "When my husband died, Mary gave me a bag with $1,000 she had collected."

As her cancer rapidly progressed, Mary was soon told she needed to go into hospice. She had no local relatives. But for two of her friends and comrades, Mary was family, and on her 75th birthday they brought her home with them. Mary died three days later.

When the working class seizes power for communism, Mary's voice will be part of that thunder.✪

LETTERS

We encourage all CHALLENGE readers to send in letters and articles about their experiences fighting the bosses worldwide.

Actions (and Buttons!) Louder than Words

Wearing an anti-racist button helps make anti-racism a mass issue and can lead to some great revealing conversations.

I liked a recent letter in Challenge about someone who wore a shirt covered in "No to Racism" buttons at the Unitarian Church convention.

I recently bought three "Oscar Grant" buttons while visiting Los Angeles. Many said they liked the button. I gave away the three I had. I had to twist arms to buy 34 more anti-racist buttons. I am now down to 1! People usually give me a dollar as a donation to the PLP.

I was disappointed that the buttons were not being sold at the Party's 50th Anniversary dinner. All members and friends should be struggled with to distribute or sell the buttons for $1 to their friends, co-workers and neighbors. Some people do not like to wear buttons, but can put them on backpacks, purses or tote bags. It is a very bold symbol that puts us in the very heart of the struggle against police brutality to say, "I am Michael Brown, Kyam Livingston," etc.

I wanted to share a good conversation I had with a college student who is Brazilian and has many Black friends. I told him that everywhere I go, people of all races and ages tell me they like the button, sometimes in passing on the street or on a crowded elevator. Sometimes they stop and talk and even buy a button. My husband and I notice that the button can be a great icebreaker. The college student asked me, a white woman in her sixties, whether "white people need a badge in order to let Black people know they are not racist."

I said because of the racist cop killings of young Black and Latin men, and a long history of racism, some Black workers are wary of white workers in some settings. This is more so since the murders of the Charleston Nine by the racist Dylann Roof. A friend who was Black said, in her opinion, Black people are often suspicious of white people because of their personal experiences with racism and their knowledge of historical racist experiences — like the lynching of Emmett Till, Jim Crow in the South and racist experiences now.

Capitalists use lots to keep us divided and oppressed, Black, white, Latin, Asian, immigrant, indigenous. We must bridge the divide by our actions, not just words. The Progressive Labor Party sees racism as one of the most powerful tools the bosses use to keep us apart. Our principled fight against racism included our role in Harlem Rebellion in 1964. A white cop had killed an unarmed Black man. Harlem erupted. PL printed up flyers "Wanted Dead or Alive, Gilligan the Cop." We defied the injunction not to have demonstrations in Harlem, and some party members were jailed.

If you are fighting for revolution, you do not hesitate to break the bosses' laws. The history of PL in the last 50 years has shown us to be leaders in the fight against racist police brutality. In so doing, we have demonstrated how essential multiracial unity is to win our struggle against capitalism.

★ ★ ★ ★

Injury to One = Injury to All

Comrades, workers and youth, Donald Trump and the Republicans' openly racist attack and scapegoating of immigrants in the U.S., along with the Democrats' hypocrisy are clear indicators of intensifying fascism in the U.S. The fight against racism is our Party's top priority. It is absolutely crucial that we organize pro-immigrant, anti-racist fightback within the schools, churches and organizations we're in. An attack on immigrant workers is an attack on the international working class. We cannot underestimate the importance of this anti-fascist struggle. Opportunities to raise political consciousness and build the Party will abound.

★ ★ ★ ★

Long Live Pittsburgh Commune

In the fine article on the Katrina Genocide (9/16 issue), the statement that the 1892 New Orleans general strike was the first such "strike in a major U.S. city." was not accurate. The first U.S. general strike occurred in Pittsburgh in 1877 as part of a national railroad strike that spread across the country in reaction to the rail bosses' 10 percent wage-cut.

When rail workers in Pittsburgh refused orders to take out their trains, the mayor and ten cops attempted to run one through. Brakeman Andrew Hice stepped in front of them and cried, "Boys, we might as well die right here." The train didn't move. Soon all trains were run up on sidings and all freight traffic, East and West, was halted. A New York Times headline proclaimed, "A Blockade Established — A Thousand Loaded Cars Detained."

Then the Pennsylvania RR bosses called out the Pittsburgh militia. When the militia commander saw that these troops were "showing their sympathies with the strikers," with whom the workers fraternized, he wired the Governor for 2,000 Philadelphia troops. That troop train were stoned all the way to Pittsburgh. At Altoona troops were stopped and forced to return, some of them giving the workers their guns. An additional Philadelphia detachment was captured and guarded by a group of Black workers. Only 1,000 Philadelphia troops ever reached Pittsburgh.

When they arrived they were met by several thousand strikers. Word had spread and soon 30,000 men, women and children — one-sixth of the city's population — stood on the hillside behind them. Two companies of troops were ordered to fix bayonets and move forward into the very bodies of the rebelling workers.

But instead of fleeing, the strikers grasped the bayonets with their bare hands and twisted them around into the onrushing soldiers. The latter then opened fire into the strikers and the Pittsburgh militia and the crowd on the hill, killing 20. The Pittsburgh regiments started back to their barracks, "vowing…not to be parties to the shooting down of their comrades-in-arms," and handed their guns over to the strikers.

Soon word of the unprovoked massacre spread and thousands of miners and workers from steel mills and factories along with stevedores from the canals gathered in the city's main squares. Short meetings were held and workers proceeded to the gun shops where they were given arms and ammunition by the owners. (Many had been bled dry by domination of the Pennsylvania RR.)

Four thousand workers with flags flying and drums beating marched in semi-military order towards the remaining Philadelphia troops. Then twenty thousand workers sent a burning engine into the roundhouse, smoking out the Philadelphia troops and driving them from the city. At 2:35 A.M. on July 22 the Times' reporter filed a dispatch saying that the workers of Pittsburgh had "taken possession of the city."

For the next four days the workers ran the city in what later became known as the Pittsburgh Commune. Black and white workers, women and men, united to patrol the streets and provide needed services. The bosses, fearful of a repeat of the Paris Commune six years earlier, began setting up army camps near big cities and organized what was to become the National Guard. They had their newspapers spread anti-communism, referring to the "Communistic element from Europe," saying Pittsburgh's workers were "animated by the devilish spirit of communism."

The workers' answer came from a Pittsburgh Critic reporter: "You systematically oppress a people and revolution is not only a right, it is a duty…."

[The complete story is available in a PL pamphlet.]

★ ★ ★ ★

Syria: Imperialists On All Sides

In the editorial about migrants in the current issue there is a paragraph that is both factually wrong and politically incoherent. It's on the second page, right after the subtitle "Imperialism Attacks Refugees Twice."

The paragraph states:

"In an effort to tilt the balance of regional power and counter the influence of Iran, a Russian proxy, U.S. bosses have financed a brutal rebellion against the state-terrorist, pro-Russian Assad regime. This four-year-old conflict has besieged workers with chemical weapons, routine bombings of civilians, torture and mass imprisonment."

What's wrong with this?

1. In the second sentence it's unclear who's doing the terrible damage to the civilian population. Is it the "brutal rebellion" or the "state-terrorist, pro-Russian Assad regime"? It should have been crystal clear that it is the Assad regime that is doing virtually all of the bombings, using chemical weapons, and torturing and jailing opponents.

2. However, far worse is the first sentence, which implies that the rebellion against Assad was initiated — and financed — by U.S. imperialism. This is simply not true. CD often falls into a regrettable pattern of ascribing every social movement to one of the competing imperialists, ignoring the agency of ordinary people.

Assad's regime caters to multi-millionaire cronies at the same time that millions are living in desperate conditions. A class analysis of Syria is important because it shows how the rebellion against Assad was a social explosion following decades of real grievances. It was not the creation of U.S. imperialism and was entirely justified. The recent uprising against Assad began in 2011 as part of the Arab Spring. There were mass demonstrations in the major cities, which were violently attacked by the Syrian military. As a result, peaceful protesters decided that only armed struggle would overthrow Assad. The U.S. — which had a good relationship with Assad — began to support the Free Syrian Army, but the FSA soon fell apart.

Today, the rebellion is led by fundamentalist Islamist groups like Jabhat al-Nusra (al-Qaeda franchise), Ahrar al-Sham, ISIS and others. They are the best organized, the best trained and best financed of the rebel groups, receiving money from the Gulf States but not the U.S., which is more afraid of these groups taking power than it is of Assad keeping control.

In effect, the U.S. — along with Iran and Russia — is supporting Assad. The CIA has trained fewer than a half dozen fighters! Its firepower is aimed at ISIS, not the Syrian military.

The fact that the major forces in Syria are politically awful should not obscure the class element of the struggle there, or imply that it's mainly driven by foreign powers.

Editorial response: *The writer is no doubt right that Syrian workers hate oppressor Assad and rose up in 2011. But the letter ignores the role played in Arab Spring by U.S. billionaire George Soros and his Open Society Foundations, which is active in 37 countries and backs organizations aligned with U.S. imperialism.*

Further, the letter fails to mention efforts by both Russia and Iran to prop up Assad. The war in Syria may have started as a homegrown dispute. But the anti-ISIS, anti-Assad campaign, which now involves Britain and France as well as the U.S. (working through both the State Department and the CIA), has clearly become a flashpoint for inter-imperialist rivalry. Anti-U.S. and anti-Saudi ISIS and al Qaeda, both seeking an oil-rich caliphate, are minor but lethal would-be imperialists in their own right.

★ ★ ★ ★

Continued on page 7

Doing Away With Signatures

You may have noticed that this year's letters are unsigned. This grows from PLP's criticism of the cult of the individual. We discourage a "following" around a particular letter writer. The value of a letter comes from its insight, rather than the individual who wrote it. Doing away with letter signatures is consistent with PLP's practice of collective authorship of our articles and editorials.

LETTERS

Continued from page 6

Pro-FascistFrancis: Unforgivable

The press is hyping Pope Francis as a liberal leader for the poor but ignoring his complicity in the mass murders of students, trade unionists, and average citizens, in Argentina during the so-called "Dirty War" of the 1970s.

The Argentinian military unleashed a massive campaign of kidnapping, torture, and murder against anyone who protested government policies. This "dirty war" was approved by the United States. U.S. imperialist David Rockefeller travelled to Argentina specifically to tell the Generals that the U.S. would not interfere.

The main targets were communists, trade union leaders, and student and other political activists who opposed the Argentinian dictatorship. But no one was safe. Police and military kidnapped pregnant mothers and gave their babies to army officers and wealthy families to raise. They kidnapped, raped, tortured, and murdered whomever they wanted, and an estimated 30,000 were "disappeared."

Jorge Mario Bergoglio, now Pope Francis, was the head of the Jesuit order in Argentina at that time. What did he do, in the midst of this fascist terror? Nothing. He did not even speak against it, much less do anything. Priests who supported impoverished workers were imprisoned and tortured but church superior Jorge Bergoglio refused to help them and years later hid priests in his home who were being investigated for supporting the military responsible for the "Dirty War."

So why aren't we hearing about this shameful past now? Because the Pope, regardless of who he is, supports the exploiters and they support him.

★ ★ ★ ★

No Five-Star Rating for Change

I noticed a change in the way letters to the paper are signed. They're not! They're all just signed with 4 stars. I think the reason for not having real names is that we want to focus on the ideas, not the person, and I agree with this. But, there's nothing wrong with pseudonyms—after all it is a letter section encouraging individuals to communicate with the readership. The pseudonyms lend some personality to the letters. But four stars at the end of every letter? Well, I don't like it and I wish you'd go back to the old way.

★ ★ ★ ★

Communism: Best Vaccine for Hep C

Continued from page 5

sultant to World Health Organization).

Smash Global Medical Apartheid!

A communist society would prioritize research, development and mass production of every life-saving treatment. Communist worker-scientists would no longer be driven by profit; medical breakthroughs would be the property of all. The communist Progressive Labor Party is fighting for that world. In Washington, DC, where the prevalence of hep C runs from 9 to 12 percent in Black working-class clinics and hospitals, PL'ers have been calling for screening and treatment. We are preparing to move to the next level with a campaign at the American Public Health Association (APHA), protests at lobbying giant PhRMA headquarters, and continued patient advocacy.

Capitalist restrictions on biological breakthroughs extend beyond hepatitis C medications. New medicines for HIV, cancer and heart disease are often price-gouged, even though government scientists did the research. We are organizing and fighting back while also showing that attempts at reforming drug pricing will never be enough. Reforms will always exclude the hundreds of millions of our working-class sisters and brothers around the world who won't ever be able to gain access to these medicines under capitalism. Only a communist revolution will enable the working class to manage its own health care, research and pharmaceutical distribution. Only a communist world can eradicate the virus of capitalism.✪

RED EYE ON THE NEWS . . .

Below are excerpts from mainstream newspapers that may be of use for our readers. Abbreviations: NYT=New York Times, GW=Guardian Weekly, LAT=Los Angeles Times

Slavery imbedded in Constitution

NYT, 9/18 — To the Editor….

Prof. Sean Wilentz's essay arguing that the Constitution was not built on slavery…is profoundly mistaken….

…The text of the Constitution as ratified…clearly…sanctions slavery, in the three-fifths clause and the fugitive slave clause….

…By allowing Southern states to count their slaves…for purposes of representation while denying those slaves…civil or human rights, the Constitution granted slaveholders magnified political poser, while creating an incentive to acquire more slaves….

Race-based slavery was this nation's original sin…. That sin could not be expurgated "until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword."

U.S. military arms commanders who sexually abuse boys

NYT, 9/21 — Kabul, Afghanistan — In his last phone call home, Lance Cpl. Gregory Buckley told his father [that] from his bunk he could hear Afghan police officers sexually abusing boys they had brought to the base.

"At night we can hear them screaming, but we're not allowed to do anything about it…." [His] father…urged his son to tell his superiors. "My son said that his officers told him to look the other way….

…American soldiers and Marines have been instructed not to intervene….

…Instead of weeding out pedophiles, the American military was arming them…and placing them as the commanders of villages….

"…we heard the terrible things the Taliban were doing to people…" said Dan Quinn, a former…captain who beat up an American-backed militia commander for keeping a boy chained to his bed as a sex slave. "But we were putting people into power who would do things that were worse than the Taliban did…."

After the beating, the Army relieved Captain Quinn of his command and pulled him from Afghanistan. He has since left the military.

Shades of 9/11: Petraeus allies with al Qaeda

le Canard ênchainé, 9/9 — …Daesh [ISIS] is not just fighting [Syria's] Bashar's army, with the hope of flying the black flags of the Islamic State from Damascus. It must also fight Al-Nosra (a subsidiary of Al Qaeda)….Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey are furnishing arms and subsidies to this curious terrorist coalition. And David Petraeus, the former great leader of American forces in Afghanistan, in Iraq, and the former boss of the C.I.A., has just invited the United States to ally itself with these good people, in an interview published on August 31 on the…website "The Daily Beast."

If this general of lost wars it to be believed, this is price for vanquishing Daesh: hand in hand with Al Qaeda….

U.S.-backed coalition commit genocide

NYT, 9/13 — Hajja, Yemen — The airstrike clammed into L-Sham water-bottling plant…killing 13 workers who were minutes away from heading….

…And it was far away from a military facility…[to] explain the strike as a tragic mistake….

Of the many perils Yemen's citizens have faced…,with starvation looming and their cities crumbling under heavy weapons, none have been as deadly as the coalition airstrikes….A Saudi-led aerial campaign…has become so broad and vicious that critics accuse the coalition of collectively punishing people living under Houthi control.

…Coalition strikes have ripped through markets, apartment buildings and refugee camps….Human rights groups say such airstrikes amount to war crimes. More than a thousand civilians…have died in the strikes, the toll rising steadily with little international notice or outrage….

…The strikes are crystallizing anger…against Saudi Arabia and its partners, including the United States. The Obama administration had provided military intelligence and logistical assistance to the coalition, and American weapons have been widely used….[including] American-manufactured cluster munitions in the fields of Yemeni farmers….The United States is finalizing a deal to provide more weapons to Saudi Arabia, including missiles for its F-15 fighter jets….

…Locals joke grimly that the coalition has run out of buildings to hit….

The majority of civilians have been killed by coalition warplanes drooping American munitions ranging from 250 to 2,000 pounds….

… "They are targeting the whole population," said Adam Mujahid Abdulla, a 20-year-old survivor….The bomb that struck his house killed seven members of his family….

…Another airstrike sliced through a building of shops and apartments….In the rubble people dug out the remains of…the local barber. "They only found his legs….

The strike's victims included…a 12-year-old girl who…had been visiting her 85-year-old grandmother….

MORE ITEMS AVAILABLE AT WWW.PLP.ORG

Smash KKKops with Communist Revolution

BALTIMORE, September 23—The Northeast District police station is home to the racist animals who beat unarmed Black man Tyrone West to death in July 2013. This evening, a toilet was symbolically placed in front of the station's sign. We chanted, "Killer cops in cell blocks!" This marked the 113th West Wednesday rally, led by Tyrone's inspiring family every week without fail.

Over the last two years, much has been learned in the struggle to indict and jail the state terrorist gang of cops—as many as 15 of them—who assaulted Tyrone after a traffic stop. They repeatedly called him the "n" word, pulled him from his car by his dreads, and proceeded to mace, Taser, beat, and club him to death!

At today's rally, a member of Progressive Labor Party explained that there are two classes of people in the world: the big business owners and the working class. When the business owners hold state power, that's capitalism. When the working class holds power, that's communism — a society of sisterhood and brotherhood where we take care of one another. As the PLer explained, only a revolution can move us from today's rotten world to a communist world. All things change. Racist, murderous cops — and the system they serve — will one day be eliminated!

The West Wednesday mobilizations offer a taste of the bright future we're fighting for. Members of the West family appreciatively hug everyone who attends. And this week, as usual, nearly everyone took a copy of CHALLENGE.

Antiracist rally for Tyrone West

Baltimore Rebellion in April

Cops' Job: Guarding Capital

Through this struggle, protesters have witnessed how the mayor, the Baltimore City State's Attorney, the police, the medical examiner's office, the state legislature, and the media have lined up behind racism. None of these officials have done anything about Tyrone's murder. Although eyewitnesses described in detail the horrific violence of the kkkops as they beat Tyrone to death, the cops were given immunity even before they completed their testimony. They remain free to brutalize and kill again.

The job of the police, a profession descended from the slave patrols of the 18th and 19th centuries, is to uphold the bosses' laws and protect private property. The entire legal system is designed to serve the ruling class and oppress the working class. About 75 percent of U.S. law deals with property relations, including businesses, machinery, money, and stocks—everything of monetary value. One half of one percent of the population owns most of that property. The legal system is their system.

After more than two years of struggle and learning from experience about the true nature of the capitalists' government and police, it's become common to hear speeches at West Wednesday that lay the blame for Tyrone's death squarely on the system.

Ignite Rebellion, Build Revolution

In April, the outrageous police murder of Baltimore's Freddie Gray ignited a righteous rebellion against police terror. The protests against the murders of Freddie and Tyrone are part of the same struggle. The persistence of the fight for justice for Tyrone West has advanced antiracism in Baltimore. At the first pre-trial hearings for the six cops who killed Freddie Gray, as these racist thugs tried to get their charges dropped, we held a West Wednesday rally outside the courthouse.

Ending police terror and changing the world is a long process. Let's not forget that the struggle to defeat slavery in the U.S. took more than two hundreds years. Like chattel slavery, the wage slavery of capitalism will also be abolished. To achieve that goal, Progressive Labor Party is organizing for a communist revolution. Never give up! Dare to struggle! Dare to win!✪

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